

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Nobuo Kishi
Parliamentary Secretary for Defense
The First Tokyo Seminar on Common Security Challenges
March 18, 2009

Chairman Dr. Nishihara, distinguished panelists, guests from overseas, ladies and gentlemen;

It's my great pleasure to welcome so many of you to the First Tokyo Seminar on Common Security Challenges.

Today, various security issues have been emerging all over the world. While conventional conflict resolutions by military means are still taken, there is development of positive trend in which nations concerned come together and discuss preventive measures or ways to settle an issue at initial stages.

Purposes of such dialogues have been changing. At the beginning, meetings were held mainly for preventing unexpected confliction such as a mutual notification of military exercise over a certain scale, and then for promoting discussion and enhancing mutual relationships of trust. Nowadays the dialogues have developed and shifted toward implementing concrete cooperation, such as bilateral or multilateral military training and the drafting of general guidelines or strategic guidelines for international disaster relief in the ASEAN Regional Forum. Time has come for the defense authorities and military organizations of each country to positively commit themselves to regional peace and stability. We believe that we can all agree that cooperation with other countries is significant in order to solve various security issues.

With these efforts, we cannot deny the fact that the basis for cooperation and coordination on security issues has been gradually established in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Japan Ministry of Defense has hosted the Tokyo Defense Forum for thirteen times to date, with the participation of members of defense authorities in Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, we held new senior officials meeting with defense authorities of ASEAN nations yesterday. Through these meetings, the Japan Ministry of Defense and related organizations of other countries have deepened mutual understanding on regional security issues. We are hosting this seminar today in order to discuss broadly with public on regional challenges.

Among various seminars or discussions on security issue, this Tokyo Seminar has three characteristics, in other words, three key values.

As the first value, this seminar focuses on the "region." In recent years, the arguments on security have focused on the global issues such as fight against terrorism or regional stabilization deeply related to terrorism. This first Tokyo Seminar is focusing on the "region", placing common security challenges and cooperation among defense authorities of each nation as a topic. With this approach, we believe that various views will emerge, such as to what extent the regional cooperation is important for each nation's security, and what should be addressed by international community or by regional community among diverse security challenges.

As the second value, this seminar is hosted by a defense authority. A number of international conferences on regional security have been held already, however, not so many have been hosted by defense authorities. This seminar, with participation of panelists from academics, would attract public attention for its reality and concreteness on discussion of common security challenges among defense authorities.

As the third value, this seminar is widely open to the public. We hope this seminar will enhance public interest in security issues.

Today, we will deepen the discussion, firstly, on the security issues which could be shared within the region, and secondly, on the ways to promote regional cooperation toward common challenges, and thirdly, on roles and responses of defense authorities for regional cooperation. By doing so, we hope this event serves to the efforts for improving security environment and for promoting regional dialogues and cooperation.

In holding this seminar, we have invited panelists from Southeast Asian countries and Japan, having rich experiences and knowledge of security issues as well as taking an active part in the studies and practices of security in the frontline. I look forward to hearing valuable opinions that are not often discussed elsewhere. Here we also have audience from defense authorities of ASEAN nations and Japan, Japanese governmental organizations, embassies of Asia-Pacific countries, scholars, the media and those who applied for today's session. We welcome your active participation to make this event meaningful to all present here.

In closing, I hope that our understanding on the topic, common security challenges, will deepen through the Tokyo Seminar and that the seminar will grow as a forum which develops further cooperative relationship among nations in the region.

Thank you.